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THE MONIST

THE TWO ACCOUNTS OF HAGAR.

(Genesis xvi. and xxi., 8-21.)

SPECIMEN OF AN HISTORICO-THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS.¹

OF all the books of the Old Testament probably Genesis interests both theologian and layman most. And indeed, for certain phases of our general theological and religious attitude it is of the greatest importance how we regard the individual narratives of Genesis, stories that have been dear to us from earliest youth up. Moreover, Old Testament theology has devoted a great, indeed an immense, amount of learning and intellect to the interpretation of Genesis. In the present century Old Testament science has been occupied especially with tracing up the sources from which by general consent Genesis is composed; and though the combination of the sources of this book is far too complicated ever to warrant the expectation of a final and complete solution of all the problems involved, yet the result has been such that we of the present day may point to it with grateful pride in our predecessors in science. Especial respect and gratitude is due to the Old Testament specialist Wellhausen, who taught us how to judge correctly the relative age and the character of the sources.

¹ Translated from the author's MS. by W. H. Carruth, of the University of Kansas.

And yet, if we consider the commentaries on Genesis, and ask them what, after all, has been the outcome for the real purpose of all work upon Genesis, to wit, the living, historico-theological understanding of these narratives, we cannot give a really satisfactory answer, despite the best of will toward what has been thus far accomplished: while dealing with all the preliminary questions the really vital matter has been neglected, the chief emphasis of investigation has been laid upon literary criticism and the combination of the sources. And this has been the case not only with Genesis but to a large extent with the rest of the Old Testament, and not with the Old Testament alone, but also frequently with the New Testament. Now, all literary criticism is in the nature of preliminary,—a truth that should never have been allowed to grow dim. Ultimately the important thing is not to know by whom and when a book was written, and what its sources were, but the real question for scholarship should ever be: How is this book to be understood? And it is very plain that theological exegesis has fallen short in this respect. Exegesis is considered tedious, and often, indeed, with justice. Why? Because it is occupied too exclusively with preliminary questions, with matters of text criticism, grammar, archæology, and lexicography, with introductory discussions, and, especially in the case of the New Testament, with the logical connexion. All this is well and good provided it remains merely preliminary and keeps within proper limits. But it is not the vital matter; the vital matter is to get a living conception of the living writer who here speaks to us, to come near to him in spirit, to put ourselves in his place when he rejoices and when he grieves, when he pines and sighs, and when he exults in his hymn of thanksgiving. The living understanding of the book, that is true exegesis.—It may be said in reply that we should not blame the past too much for spending so much time over preliminary matters and failing so largely to reach the matter of prime importance, since these very preliminaries had to be disposed of in advance. I am quite willing to accept this explanation, and only ask consent to my proposition that it is now time to begin energetically with real exegesis. Now what appears to be the object of

such exegesis in Genesis? This I propose to show by an example in what follows.¹

HAGAR'S FLIGHT; GENESIS XVI.

1. *Sarah, Abraham's wife, bare him no children; and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.*—The narrative makes an entirely new start, assuming only one thing, that there is a man by the name of Abraham; everything else is told in the story. We infer from this that the narrative once existed independently. In oral tradition every story is told as complete in itself; the connexion in which we find the stories at present was supplied afterwards.—The slave, Hagar, is the property of Sarah, not of Abraham. According to Israelitish custom parents could give to a young wife a slave as dowry, who was thus her personal property, and not, like the other maid-servants, at the disposal of her husband. The slave is a foreigner, which was probably a very common thing in an Israelitish family. In this particular case she was an Egyptian and named Hagar. These items ought to mean something, just what, we are to learn in the following.

2. *Now Sarah said unto Abraham: Thou knowest that Jahweh has denied me children; go in unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain a son by her.*—The great mysteries of generation, conception and birth are derived in all antiquity from the divinity, in polytheistic religions usually from a goddess. In Israel this, along with many other matters, had been transferred to Jahweh who thus receives many and sometimes quite varied predicates.—An old Israelitish legal custom is here referred to, according to which the wife, if barren, may offer another woman as substitute and adopt the latter's children. Of course, it costs Sarai some struggle to sur-

¹ For further exposition of these stories the reader is referred to my *Commentary on Genesis*, soon to appear from the press of Ruprecht and Vandenhoeck in Göttingen. The author would like to say at the same time that this Commentary which is intended primarily for the Old Testament scholar and the student of theology, will appeal also to the interest of the lay reader who is familiar with history. It is hoped that friends of the Bible who get hold of this Commentary will recognise the devoted love with which the author has labored for many years upon Genesis.

render to her husband the slave who is her personal property, but she conquers herself in the hope of thus obtaining children. Childlessness is a misfortune and a disgrace, while motherhood brings honor and dominion in the house. The wish of the slave is not consulted in the surrender; it is a great honor for her to have intercourse with her master.

4. *And Abraham obeyed Sarah, and he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived. But when she saw that she was with child, she despised her mistress.* The slave woman, shown too much honor, grows arrogant. And the narrator makes plain that he strongly disapproves of such action on the part of the slave, emphasising the words: she despised her mistress. This must never be, for the slave must honor his master.

5. *And Sarah said unto Abraham: The wrong that I suffer be upon thee! I myself gave my handmaid into thine arms, and now that she sees that she is with child, she despises me. Jahweh judge between me and thee.* Sarah is indignant, so indignant that she even invokes the righteous judgment of Jahweh against her husband, for she feels that she has deserved reward and not insult from Abraham.

6. *Then said Abraham to Sarah: Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her whatever seemeth to thee well. So Sarah dealt hardly with her; but she fled from before her.* Abraham, always tractable, renounces his claim to his concubine for the sake of peace in the family. The phrase "she is in thy hand" indicates a legal act, a cession; accordingly Hagar is now once more Sarah's slave. Before this Sarah could not help enduring contempt; now she turns the tables and shows Hagar who is mistress. What she did to her, as well as what Hagar had done before to offend her mistress, the narrator fails to tell; primitive narrative is very sparing of such details. It is not to be supposed that she treated her gently, for an Israelitish slave was used to sound drubbings.—The few touches make the three personages perfectly clear: Abraham is tractable and yields to his wife; at her request he takes Hagar as a concubine, and again at her bidding he dismisses her. Sarah is the impulsive woman, proudly conscious of her position as wife, in passion cruel and very subjective: in order to obtain children she gave

away Hagar, and yet she regards this very act as deserving of recognition from her husband. And so, in her passionate indignation at the injustice done her, she sets herself up as unselfish before Abraham,—which is psychologically very true to nature. The Israelitish husband probably sighs in secret over his irritable wife. Finally the slave, whose fluctuant fortunes entertain and move the hearer; first a slave, then her master's concubine and mother of the heir, and as such impudent toward her childless mistress; then severely abused and offended in her maternal pride. These three: husband, wife, and maid, are clearly Israelitish types; that they act just as they do, seems to the naïve legend quite a matter of course, for this is the fashion of Israel.

From this point on, Hagar is the leading character. “But she fled from before her.” In the construction of the narrative this sentence is the climax of all that has preceded (the object of which is to explain this flight), and the preliminary for all that is to follow. What are we to regard as the motive of Hagar's flight? The narrator informs us that Hagar was with child, and that she dared to flee into the wilderness, the wilderness where deprivations, violence and murder threatened her. It was, then, an act of desperation and of defiance: better all the dangers of the wilderness than the insults in the tent of Sarah! Thus we have a complete picture of Hagar: when it was well with her she treated her mistress with insolence, when she is humbled she runs away in defiance. At the same time we are not to lose all sympathy with the unruly Hagar; for afterwards the legend tells us that the divinity himself took care of her. The judgment of the god is of course the judgment of the narrator himself, who takes pleasure in the unbending will of the stubborn woman.

7. *Then she met an angel of Jahweh¹ by the fountain in the wilderness (by the fountain in the way to Shur).* In connecting the story we have to consider that Hagar has come to the fountain to drink; just as any travellers and Bedouins come to the fountain. It seems

¹ Thus we should read.

that Hagar is acquainted with the desert. "The fountain" is a definite fountain, the location and name of which are given at the close of the story. The phrase "by the fountain in the way to Shur" anticipates this description, and is a proper addition as far as situation goes. The fountain is on the road from Canaan to Egypt, which suits the circumstances perfectly: the fugitive Hagar is fleeing to her old home in Egypt. The old narratives always fit closely into the surroundings in which they take place; they do not originate in the study, are not learned accounts, but popular tales, told in the very places of which they treat. There Hagar meets the divinity, who bears the name of "Jahweh's angel."

Now we are struck by the fact that Hagar afterwards believes that she has seen Jahweh himself: "And she called the name of the Jahweh that spake unto her *El roi*" אֱלֹהֵי רֹאִי. This strange confusion of Jahweh with the angel of Jahweh is not rare elsewhere in the old narratives, and has been the occasion of curious conjectures and still more curious attempts at explanation on the part of modern investigators. In all cases where the given statement of facts in an otherwise reasonable tradition seems to be absurd the explanation is to be found in the existence of a history in which a peculiar distortion has made apparent nonsense out of what was originally intelligible and simple. Older versions introduced Jahweh himself in such cases; later editors and copyists were offended by the notion of Jahweh's being thus too intimately involved with the world, and preferred in these passages to speak of the angel of Jahweh, that is, an inferior divine being. But this modification is not carried out consistently; in some places Jahweh's name remains. And thus has come about the apparent absurdity that an angel of Jahweh appears, but that Hagar declares that she saw Jahweh. This substitution for the god of an inferior divine being is a process which we may find frequently in the history of religion elsewhere.—But we can go a step further. Later Ishmael receives his name from the fact that *God heareth*; but this name is not She-maja, "Jahweh heareth," but Ishmael, "El heareth." From this we conjecture that the oldest version of the story did not contain the name of Jahweh at all, but spoke of an "El," that is, god. The

correctness of this inference is shown by the word of Hagar: she called the name of the Jahweh that spake unto her, "El roi."

So "El roi" was doubtless the original name of the god of this narrative. Accordingly we perceive in the legend three stages of religious development. Originally the god was "él roi" אֱלֹהֵי רֹאִי, then Jahweh was introduced and "él roi" became an epithet of Jahweh in this place; finally the angel of Jahweh took the place of Jahweh.

Furthermore we are able to say something about the nature of this "él roi" אֱלֹהֵי רֹאִי. This god appears at the fountain, he is a fountain-deity, and indeed the deity of a certain fountain, the fountain "lahai roi" לַהַי רֹאִי. It is not a matter of accident that the name of the divinity, "él roi," and that of his fountain, "beer lahai roi" בְּעַר לַהַי רֹאִי, are found together; this god is the deity of this fountain. And so we thus obtain a glance into an ancient religion, in which exists a belief in local deities, specifically in fountain deities. What we know of the pre-Israelitish religion of Canaan agrees entirely with these inferences. The pre-Israelitish religion of Canaan worshipped a great number of such local deities, the "bealim" and in Canaan, as well as in other lands, fountains were frequently held sacred; in the earliest times people saw a reflexion of the divinity in the living, ever-gushing, life-giving water. When Israel occupied Canaan it adopted also a portion of the Canaanitish deities, religious ceremonies and legends, and to some extent identified these deities with its own Jahweh. And thus here the god of the fountain, *él roi* is regarded as equivalent to Jahweh.

In the same way the epithet of Jahweh at Bethel is *él Bethel*, at Beersheba, *él olam*, at Jerusalem, *él eljon*; all of these names were originally the names of the local deities of these places, and were only transferred later by Israel to Jahweh.

But now it is very important to note that the relation between the fountain and the god, which must have been very close once, has become very loose in the present form of the story; the god is no longer represented as coming forth from the fountain or vanishing in it. This feature is common in the legends of Genesis: the god and the place of his worship are always rather loosely connected. Israel identified Jahweh with the local deities to a certain

extent, but did not think of Jahweh as so closely connected with the locality. So the history of the Hagar stories is a small section of the great process of the adoption by Israel of Canaanitish worship.

The god appeared to Hagar at the fountain and spoke with her. Such appearances and conversations on the part of the god are nothing rare in ancient legends. And incidentally it is very common for the god to appear unrecognised. It is characteristic of divinity that it works in secret; it is too awful to appear openly; man would needs die with terror if he recognised its true nature. Accordingly the legends like to tell how the god lifts the veil gently and gradually until the human being has recognised him; but at the moment when this occurs the god vanishes. Thus it is here.

8. *He said: Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence comest thou? whither goest thou? And she said: I must flee from before my mistress Sarah.* It is assumed in this conversation that Hagar did not at first recognise the god; in her eyes he is merely "a man." The man speaks to her, not she to him; that she would not dare to do because he looks so "fearful." But his words are wonderful. She does not know him, but he knows her and calls her by name. Hagar cannot fail to wonder whether this is perhaps a man of God. Then he continues: "Whence comest thou? Whither goest thou?" a question of surprise and also of interest: why are you, a woman, here in the wilderness? But Hagar answers as though through her shut teeth; no whimpering and complaining, but only the fact that she is fleeing.

11. *And the angel of Jahweh said to her: Behold, thou art with child.* Hagar's pregnancy—such is the assumption in this remark—has thus far been a secret; and the man knows even this most intimate secret! Accordingly she is inclined to believe him when he continues: *Thou shalt bear a son*, and then prescribes his name: *And thou shalt call his name Ishmael* ("god heareth"); *for Jahweh hath heard how thou hast been mistreated.* The legends are fond of telling how an oracle is pronounced regarding an unborn child; what the man afterwards became, the divinity prophesied to his mother before his birth: and so his later fortunes are not a matter of chance, but divine destiny. And even his name is not left to the

whim of the parents, but is fixed by the command of God. And God imparted also even the significance of the name. The ancient Hebrew people devoted much attention to the significance of names; almost every old legend contains such interpretations, which are often ingenious and full of meaning.—But the boy is to be called Ishmael because God has heard “thy mistreatment.” The original uses the same expression as before in “she dealt hardly with her.” God has heard of this mistreatment, heard even now as he hears Hagar speak. But to Hagar these words are a new puzzle; whence does this remarkable man know that God has heard of this mistreatment? And now she even hears from his mouth a prophecy regarding the destiny of her son:

12. *He shall be as a wild ass among men, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall sit upon the nose¹ of all his brethren.* These words are intended to comfort Hagar and encourage her to endure all her hardships here, for a reward is in store for her trouble.—The legend details the destiny of Ishmael to become a Bedouin with unmistakable satisfaction. It compares the Bedouin with the animal that shares the desert with him. The wild ass is untamable and fond of freedom; he laughs at cities and the driver; but indeed his food is scanty: a splendid picture of the nomad. And further: Ishmael's life is a constant warfare, and he is every man's foe: a lot enjoyed by men of heroic type, but, on the other hand, full of dangers. “And he sits upon the nose of all his brethren,” a situation more agreeable to him than to the brethren whose cattle he robs and whose fields he plunders. This vigorous description of the destiny of Ishmael may serve as a warning to the modern teacher not to get too mild a conception of the tone of the story. For the legend thinks, rather, that this untamable Ishmael is a worthy son of his bold and defiant mother, who also refused to bend her neck under the yoke, but spurned a life of security because it was also a life of humiliation. And such as she is as she stands at this moment before the god, defiant and at odds

¹ This extraordinary phrase is not suggested in any of the variants of the English Revised Version. Yet Professor Gunkel seems not to use it whimsically; he comments upon it later as though it must be taken literally.

with the world, so her son is to become, he also, unruly, freedom-loving and the foe of all the world. Now comes the conclusion. As is customary in old legends, the place, and in this case the god also, receives a name.

13. *She called the name of the Jahweh that spake unto her: Thou art "el roi"; for she said, Verily here have I seen the end (?)*¹. . . . The explanation of the name has become unclear in the text; from the sense of the connexion we should expect perhaps: "the end of my distress." The narrator of the legend reflects upon the meaning of the name *el roi*, the original and precise meaning of which is scarcely known to him, and interprets it in his own fashion. The name of the fountain also is explained.

14. *Therefore the fountain is called "beer lahai roi"; it lies, as is well known, between Kadesh and Bered.*—The conclusion of the narrative is lacking. We expect to be told further: how Hagar remained by this fountain; how she bore Ishmael there and gave him the name; how Ishmael grew up and became a tribe which had its seat by this fountain and this "él" for its god. Why this conclusion is lacking will be shown hereafter.

THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE LEGEND.

The legend deals with Ishmael. This name appears elsewhere in ancient legends and histories as the name of a Bedouin race. Plainly the Ishmael of whom our story tells is according to the legend the ancestor of the race that is said to bear his name. This is made perfectly certain by xxi. 18, according to which the boy Ishmael became a great race. The same thing is true of many personages in Genesis, especially, for instance, of Jacob and Esau, of Judah, Joseph and the other sons of Jacob, of Moab and Ammon, of Shem, Ham and Japhet, and many others. All these in history and in reality are races and tribes; in legend and poetry they are regarded as individuals, ancestors of the races which they personify. We need not raise the question here how extensively this view is to be applied to the personages of Genesis; I am showing here only

¹ The Eng. Revised Version has here no variant at all, but something altogether different: "Have I even here looked after him that seeth me?"

that the legend of Ishmael, if I understand it rightly, requires this interpretation. When this legend describes Ishmael's love of freedom and his quarrelsomeness, it means by this not only that there lived once a man named Ishmael who had this character, but it desires at the same time to characterise thereby the habits of his descendants, the Ishmaelites. When it gives the name of the fountain beside which Ishmael's birth was prophesied, this is no fiction, but that fountain, we must conclude, was the chief seat and sanctuary of the tribe of the Ishmaelites. Likewise when the legend reports the name of the god who appeared to Ishmael's mother, it means that this god, "él roi," is the tribal god of Ishmael.

Finally, the name of the mother, Hagar, is no invention. There must have been a primitive tribe named Hagar, from which the tribe of Ishmael was derived. The mother of Ishmael is a slave; this feature also has its significance. Those who tell one another this story, and who derive their origin from Isaac, the legitimate son, insist that they are nobler and more legitimate than their brother Ishmael. Furthermore, Hagar is an Egyptian, and Ishmael is therefore not pure stock, but only a half-breed. Such mixtures of Bedouin tribes and fugitive Egyptians are proven on historical evidence.¹ Ishmael is the older race, the first-born; this feature also is confirmed by the facts; when Israel came upon the stage of history Ishmael was already forgotten. And thus, if we but understand how to read these ethnographic legends, we can derive from them much information which is sometimes of great historical value. And this information is often the more valuable because these legends reach back into such primitive times, times from which we have no historic reports. Thus, of this race of Ishmael, with its center at Beer lehi roi, באר להי ראי, we have no other historical information. Moreover, it needs no argument to prove that these legends themselves become much more vivid when we understand their primitive meaning.

¹ Professor H. Winckler at Berlin says that the word מצריית is not related with מצרים Egypt, but with מצר, a name of a Bedouin tribe in the south of Palestine; a hypothesis which I cannot but think very probable. Hagar is according to the old account at home in the wilderness.

Many of the legends of Genesis aim to answer questions, and we fail to understand them if we do not recognise this purpose. Thus the legend we are considering asks the questions: Whence does Ishmael get its name? How does it come to have this location, this reputation, and this god? The need of furnishing answers to these questions led to our legend, or at least gave it its character. That is, our legend treats the origin of the tribe of Ishmael. The chief question is this: How does it come that Ishmael, our elder brother, has become a Bedouin? He is surely Abraham's son, conceived in Abraham's house, and yet a child of the desert, born beside a fountain in the wilderness; how can this be? The legend answers: When his mother had conceived him she became a fugitive, and thus he was born in the wilderness.

Age of the Legend.—Our legend must be very old, since it knows so much of this Ishmael that we can find in no historical account. Moreover, the characters of the personages are quite primitive. We can distinguish in the legends of Genesis two types, an older, in which men are drawn as they are, from life, and a later, which describes religious ideals. Very clearly the present legend belongs to the naïve older type. The conception of divinity is primitive also: the god sides with the defiant Hagar.—A great number of the legends of Genesis are not of Israelitish origin; many were simply adopted and amalgamated by Israel. Such may from the beginning be presumed to be the case with the legend of Ishmael. Just as, for instance, the Kyffhäuser legend¹ has, as a matter of course, its home at Mount Kyffhäuser, so it is natural that the tribal legend of Ishmael should have been told originally in Ishmael, and have had its home at Beer lahai roi. This would be borne out by a number of features, especially the vigorous description of the Bedouin life. Of course, the Ishmaelites must have told the story somewhat differently; they would not have made their ancestor the son of a fugitive slave. In our version we have the story as it was told in accordance with Israelitish tradition.

¹ According to a familiar German legend Emperor Frederick Barbarossa sits at a marble table within the Kyffhäuser, a mountain in Thuringia.

Style and Preservation of the Legend.—The legend is a remarkable model of the oldest narrative style. The first portion of the story, especially, is distinguished for the variety and truthfulness of its pictures. At the same time the legend is distinguished for strict connectedness of action and especially for its admirable condensation. The narrator achieves wonders in his omission of everything not absolutely essential; with great energy he holds to the main thread of the action. Such admirable art can only be the product of a long artistic tradition; we cannot but assume that it was cultivated in Israel by a class of professional *raconteurs*. Ancient legends usually show their great antiquity by the omission or veiling of some of their elements which had become offensive to later times. Thus it is here. The legend has forgotten that the god was the local god of the fountain, and the fountain really a sanctuary. How and whence the god came, where and when he disappeared, and when Hagar recognised him, all this the legend omits to say. There results a peculiar intellectual chiaroscuro which is characteristic of the ancient legends.

THE EXPULSION OF ISHMAEL, XXI, 8–21.

8. *And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.* 9. *And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.*¹ 10. *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.* With clever and natural touches the legend indicates the motives for the expulsion of Ishmael. At the bottom of it was Sarah's jealous love for her son; for maternal love may become most terrible cruelty if any one tries to harm the beloved child. To give us a vivid picture of this the legend takes us to the day of the weaning of Isaac. This is the day on which, after the dangerous years of infancy—for the weaning occurred in about the third year,—the mother rejoices in her darling and regards it with especial tenderness. On this day Sarah happens to notice Ishmael playing with her child. This element of playing, מִצְחֵק (*mesaheg*) is derived

¹ Thus the Septuagint.

from the name Isaac יִשְׁחָק (*jishaq*), for the legends are fond of such ingenious plays on the names of persons and places.—The thoughts of Sarah as she sees the children playing are not given, in accordance with the custom of ancient narrative method; we have to guess them from the context. The mother is thinking—what else should she do on such a day as this?—of the future of her child, and already planning for it—for mother-love has far-seeing eyes. And so when she sees the two children playing together it occurs to her that they will divide the inheritance when they are men. And so she demands of Abraham that he cast out Hagar and his own son. The master has the right to dismiss his slave and expel his children entirely in accordance with his personal whim. It is to be noted that Hagar has in this case a different position in the house from that of the former account. There she was Sarah's property; but here she belongs to Abraham, and is at the same time his concubine; in this account she has nothing whatever to do with Sarah.

The older account went on to tell at this point how Abraham, being tractable, obeyed his wife; with heavy heart, indeed, though not on account of the slave—for slaves are plentiful—but on account of his son whom he is to cast out among strangers. But we may infer that she pursued him with her remarks and worried him so that his breath grew short as with one dying. The oldest account, intimate with human nature, probably regarded this yielding on Abraham's part as quite intelligible; the later version, which wished to see in Abraham a moral ideal, took offence at his casting out his own child. Accordingly a later hand has interpolated here the following: 11. *And the words were very grievous in Abraham's sight, on account of his son.* 12. *But God said unto Abraham: Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of thy bondwoman. Hearken unto Sarah in all that she saith unto thee, for in Isaac only shall thy seed be called.* That is, the descendants of Ishmael shall forget that they are derived from Abraham; so that he nevertheless will become no real son. And the Lord further comforts Abraham as to Ishmael's fate: 13. *But also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.* That

these words are not a part of the original narrative is evident for many reasons, especially the following : If the ancient legend had known anything of this command, it would have mentioned it at the beginning of the story and have built up the whole story on this alone (as in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac). For a command from God is for the pious an adequate motive and permits no other subordinate motive. On the other hand, when the ancient legend shows such care to depict the jealousy of Sarah, it does so with the intention of explaining from this and this alone the expulsion of Ishmael. If in accordance with this we omit the command, the story gains in beauty and consistency of form and at the same time in antiquity and force of substance.

Thus far the occurrences in Abraham's tent. The legend now goes on to tell of the fortunes of Hagar and Ishmael. 14. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a leather bottle of water and gave it to Hagar, and laid the boy on her shoulder,¹ and sent her away.* With deep sympathy the legend now tells of Hagar's expulsion and distress. A bottle of water and a loaf is all that she receives for the journey; how will she fare when this little supply is exhausted? Will she find her way in the pathless land? *And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.* So Abraham's home is to be thought of as not far from Beer-sheba. 15. *Now when the water in the leather bottle was spent she cast the boy under one of the shrubs,* 16 *and went and sat down over against him, as it were a bow-shot; for she said: let me not look upon the death of the child.* Now mother and child get into the most terrible mortal danger: the way is lost, the water is out; all that is left is to die. The story is evidently nearing its crisis, and on this account becomes unusually detailed: the situation is described closely and an exception is even made to the general rule against reporting thoughts directly. In her despair she cast the boy, whom she had been carrying, under a bush. Naturally the boy is exhausted sooner than his mother; he will die first. But the mother's eye cannot endure the sight of his death anguish; therefore she goes apart some

¹ Thus we are to read.

distance, but not—O loving and inconsistent mother heart!—not too far. Once more the affecting scene is described: *And she sat over against him; and he¹ lifted up his voice and wept.* The scene is meant to be impressed deeply upon our hearts. Here sits the mother waiting for the death of her son, and there lies the boy panting and crying for water. At this point we are to suppose a pause.—Then follows the third portion of the story, the turn of fortune, the rescue of Ishmael. 17. *And God heard the voice of the lad.* This statement, which puts an end to all the distress, echoes in the hearts of the listeners: “God heard,” he is a God of mercy; God hears even the voice of weeping children; no one is too slight, not even a weeping child, for God to have compassion on him!—The saying is repeated in what follows. The angel exclaims to Sarah: *God hath heard the voice of the lad.* The narrator emphasises this statement thus because he has in it reached the point. He proposes to take up this phrase later in order to explain the name of Ishmael. It must be admitted that the narrator has worked up to this point, which he had all the time in view, in a remarkable manner. This is the supreme art of story telling. *Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her.* The Elohist, to whom we owe this beautiful account, speaks here of the angel of God, as in the other account the Jahwist speaks of the angel of Jahweh. Here too it is to be supposed that the original form of the story spoke of God himself, and that the later time substituted “the angel of God” out of religious respect. The same religious consideration explains also why the angel calls “out of heaven”; in the older legends the divinity himself comes upon earth, and appears like a man among men; thus it is in the first version of the Hagar story. But later times took offence at such an anthropomorphic conception of God, and preferred to say that God remained in heaven and talked with the patriarchs from there. In the present case the two views are combined: it is only an angel who speaks, and even he remains in heaven.—But the angel calls to Hagar: *What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the*

¹ Thus we are to read with the Septuagint.

voice of the lad where he is. The place where the boy lies is a definite place, a place where God hears, that is, a sacred place. This is a particularly fine touch, which we must not miss: in her supreme distress, when in her despair Hagar threw the lad down, she hit upon a place where God is near and hears; when her need was greatest, God's help was nearest. 18. *Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him firmly in thine hand;* do not give him up, for he is destined to great things; *for I will make him*—an over-exuberant prophecy, especially to the ear of antiquity—*a great nation.* Thus the angel gives Hagar new courage. 19. *And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.* She sees all at once what she had not noticed before, a well. This touch, too, is true to life. A well is a deep hole in the ground, at the bottom of which is the water; such a well may be hidden from the eye by the slightest elevation of the surface, and is often not easily recognisable from a distance. Whether the well was already there, or whether it was called forth on the moment by God's word, we do not learn; the delicate tale draws a discreet veil over this point. In the original form of the story this well was without doubt a sacred well, a well at which God appears, God hears.

And she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. Here is a touching trait: we are not told that Hagar herself drank; that is mother-love.—The story is now finished; we expect further only the conference of names, customary at the close, and some notes as to Ishmael's future fortunes. The giving of names has been omitted by later editors, because the same names were already explained in other stories. But originally there must have appeared here, first, the name of Ishmael; it is evident that the original narrator must have given this from the fact that the name of Ishmael has been avoided in the story up to this point, and only the expression "the lad" employed; and next, the name of the well. According to the context this name was Beer-sheba: Hagar wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. We may presume that the narrator interpreted this name as the well of "the one crying for help," beer sewa בְּרַעַר שֶׁבַע: this is why he told at the point noted that the lad "cried for help." And now the further fortunes of

Ishmael: 20. *And God was with the lad, and he grew.* The growth of the lad in the midst of the dangers and hardships of the wilderness can only be explained as a miracle of God. *And*, when he became a man, *he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran*, between Canaan and Egypt (or Msr). 21. *And his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.* This was originally a variant of the note that his mother was an Egyptian or a Musrith.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO ACCOUNTS.

The two accounts agree in the situation and in details. The actors are the same: the jealous Sarah, the tractable Abraham, the slave Hagar, who bears a child by Abraham before her mistress has a child. The principal action is also the same in both: first they describe a scene in Abraham's tent in which Sarah, jealous and cruel, urges Abraham and Abraham yields, and, at the close, Hagar's leaving Abraham's tent and going into the wilderness. Thereupon Hagar gets into great distress. Then the divinity intervenes. He reveals himself at the well and is moved by the misery of the fugitive. Thus Ishmael receives his name: "God hears," and the well too is named. Ishmael grows up in the wilderness and becomes a nation. The two accounts answer the same question: how did the people of Ishmael originate? and how did it come to be in the wilderness? how does it come by the sacred well where it dwells, and by the name of Ishmael? In many details also the two accounts agree; for example, in the fact that the God who speaks begins his words with a question to Hagar.

The conclusion from all this is that the two accounts are variants of one and the same story. The existence of such variants is not surprising, but rather the rule. These stories existed originally in oral tradition, and though we may have good reason for supposing our tradition to be very persistent and faithful, it is a matter of course that it cannot remain absolutely unchanged. Each one tells the story a little differently. When religion, ethical views, and æsthetic taste change, legend slowly follows them. Thus there arise variants and new versions. Such variants are found in our

book of Genesis in great numbers; the two accounts of Hagar are one of the most interesting examples of this.

The later collectors and editors, who put together all the material known to them, could not avoid the task of combining the variants into some sort of rational connexion. It is particularly instructive in the story of Hagar to watch the editor at his work. We have the first account from the hand of the Jahwist, the second from the hand of the Elohist; the editor who made them both a part of his work is therefore the editor of both Jahwist and Elohist, the so-called Jehovist. He could not leave the stories exactly as they were: Ishmael cannot be born, named, and brought up in the wilderness twice. Accordingly the editor left out in the first version Ishmael's growth, in the second his birth and name. But this was not sufficient. If in the first version Hagar flees, and in the second is cast out, then she must have returned to Abraham in the meantime; and the editor was obliged to state this expressly and give some reason for it. To this end he interpolated in the first account a command of the angel (xvi. 9): *Return to thy mistress and submit to the ill treatment which she inflicts upon thee.* And so poor Hagar has to go back home, only to be cast out later. The editor seems to have felt how hard the lot of Hagar was thus made, and in order to soften the matter a little he added a promise (10): *And the angel of Jahweh said unto her: I will multiply thy seed so that it may not be numbered for multitude.* That these words are an interpolation is evident from many indications; not only from the heavy style of the thrice-repeated "the angel of Jahweh said unto her," but especially from the fact that this command is out of accord with the whole course of the story: in the original story Jahweh intends to comfort Hagar for her humiliation, while in the addition he is sending her back into slavery; in the original form of the story Hagar has not at this point recognised the divinity, while the addition ignores this fact; moreover the promise that Hagar's descendants shall become a whole nation is too early here, for the story does not tell until later in the sequence that Hagar was to bear a son; the reverse would be the natural order. And so, although the additions are not entirely consistent with the original

legend, but actually spoil it, yet we must admit that the editor has performed his difficult and thankless task skilfully and with fidelity to the tradition.

But these are observations of minor importance. It is far more important and more interesting to compare the two variants. We have noted that such variants are often not accidental, but are small reflexions of great changes in the spiritual life of the people. Accordingly when we examine these variations we are no longer concerned with the works of individual authors or editors, but in fact with great currents of national life.

The two variants differ greatly in many details and especially in the tone of the whole. While the tender and emotional is prominent in the second version, in the first the tone is far more hearty and vigorous. This very important difference is seen especially in the drawing of the figure of Hagar. The first narrator enjoys the unbending force of the spirited woman; but the second story weeps over Hagar with many tears as a poor outcast slave. Accordingly the fortunes of Hagar differ much in the two versions: in the first case she fled in defiance; in the second she is driven away against her will. In the first case her distress consists in the mistreatment which her maternal pride will not endure, and the mistreatment affects herself alone; in the second case the distress consists in the expulsion itself: in the wilderness mother and child both incur the danger of death. For this reason the narrator of the second version lays all his stress upon the description of the misery of mother and child in the wilderness; the first version has not a single syllable for this misery. In the first version Sarah is jealous of the arrogant slave who is elevated to the rank of concubine; in the second, her jealousy is aimed at the slave child which she is not willing to have share the inheritance with her own. In the first version Hagar is acquainted with the wilderness: she goes, as her situation suggests, to the fountain in the wilderness; but in the second version she loses her way in the wilderness: not until God opens her eyes does she find a well. In the first story God hears of the mistreatment of Hagar; in the second, he hears the weeping of the child. All these differences result from the one capital difference, that in the

first story Hagar is painted in strong colors and vigorous shading ; she is the genuine, defiant, untamable ancestress of the Bedouin ; while in the second story the local colors are faded and Hagar has become the purely human figure of an outcast mother with her perishing child. From this point of view there can be no doubt that the first version is far older than the second. Later times had quite forgotten who Hagar really was: they no longer knew the tribe of Hagar. And the wilderness had grown more remote to the men of later times, who were themselves peasants or townsfolk: it seems to them only a land full of dangers, without paths or water. But at the same time—and this is the chief point—the times had become gentler and took more delight in tearful tales than in vigorous ones. We can find evidence elsewhere in Genesis of the increase of tenderer moods in later times.

This later origin of the second version is plainly seen in the fact that in the first version Ishmael receives his name, as is fitting, at his birth, while in the second he is not named until he is half-grown, which is clearly unnatural.—The religious conceptions of the second version are also later than those of the first. In the first, the divinity appears on earth in person ; in the second, Hagar merely hears a voice from heaven. In the first, the divinity is pleased with the strong and vigorous woman—a religious conception with which we may perhaps compare that in the strenuous story of Samson ; while in the second the religion too has become much gentler: the thought of God hearing the weeping of the child goes straight to the heart. The fact that the fountain was a place of worship is not prominent in either version ; yet the first has preserved the primitive name of the god of the place. In any case, the second version is not servilely dependent on the first, but the changed form has been produced by a genuinely poetic soul and is at least the equal of the original: each in its way is a gem of legendary narrative.

I have finished. I have tried first to render the old legends alive again to the reader, and to introduce him to the moods and conceptions of olden time, and especially to the religious and ethical life of antiquity as it is displayed in these old tales. At the

same time I have tried to show the peculiar beauty of these remarkable narratives, and to interpret their style. But everywhere in the course of the investigation we have been led back to a history. For this is characteristic of the human mind, that it has a history; and it is impossible to interpret even the slightest spiritual product of man unless at the same time one gives its history. In these old legends, in which ancient Israel expresses itself without reserve, is found preserved the history of the national spirit of Israel. I have tried in the present chapter to give a few, even though humble, illustrations of this. I chose this particular legend for the reason that I believed that I could best exemplify the manner of investigation in a theme which does not involve dogmatic theories,—as might be the case in the story of Paradise. When all the stories have been investigated in this way, then we shall be prepared to draw pictures of ancient Israel that shall be true to life, and a history of its religious and ethical life in earliest times.

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